

# Hurricane Harvey EPA Response

## Daily News Clips

9/2/17

1:30 pm

### **1 – 2 more chemical containers explode at Crosby chemical plant**

<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/article/Second-of-chemicals-erupt-at-flooded-Arkema-plant-12166702.php>

Towering flames and plumes of jet black smoke poured from the flooded Arkema plant in Crosby as volatile chemicals exploded late Friday afternoon. One container caught fire, and the heat from that fire ignited a second container about 25 feet away, said Arkema executive Richard Rennard. The dramatic display was the latest chapter of a chemical disaster, caused, in part, by floodwaters from Hurricane Harvey.

### **2 – Phone Lines Set Up to Find Harvey Survivors**

[http://www.theadvocate.com/baton\\_rouge/news/article\\_b9a2bb20-8ff4-11e7-b206-bfa1bea5c60d.html](http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/article_b9a2bb20-8ff4-11e7-b206-bfa1bea5c60d.html)

Texas families separated during Hurricane Harvey evacuation will be able to find out whether their relatives are safe in Louisiana shelters through a phone bank, the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services announced Saturday. Those seeking family members must provide their relative's name, address and date of birth, as well as his or her own name or contact information. The state will determine whether the relatives are in one of Louisiana's two shelters and then pass along the message.

### **3 – Where Harvey's effects were felt the most in Texas**

[https://apps.texastribune.org/harvey-fema-damage-analysis/?\\_ga=2.136984688.1559219615.1504029985-1138578781.1503682765](https://apps.texastribune.org/harvey-fema-damage-analysis/?_ga=2.136984688.1559219615.1504029985-1138578781.1503682765)

According to a preliminary analysis by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, at least 150,000 properties may have been affected by the floodwaters of Hurricane Harvey. A majority of these properties — at least 96,000 — are located in Harris County. FEMA's damage modeling is based on parcel data and coastal and river flood gauge levels, and does not account for damage that may have been caused by wind or levee breaks, nor does it take into account that structures on a property may be elevated.

### **4- Officials are starting to grapple with the costs of Harvey. Here's what you should know today.**

<https://www.texastribune.org/2017/09/02/floodwater-ebbs-recovery-after-harvey-just-beginning/>

Federal and state relief efforts are coming into focus as the extent of the damage wrought by Hurricane Harvey becomes apparent. But though floodwaters have ebbed, many parts of the state still face environmental hazards and other risks. The Associated Press reported Saturday that many of the city's ultra-polluted Superfund sites are flooded, raising concerns about the spread of toxins. Earlier Saturday, Houston officials said several wastewater treatment plants in the city were flooded and asked residents to reduce their water usage until further notice. Officials said drinking water remained safe.

### **5 – EPA hasn't inspected flooded Houston-area Superfund sites: report**

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/348988-epa-hasnt-inspected-flooded-houston-area-superfund-sites>

# Hurricane Harvey EPA Response

## Daily News Clips

Officials from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have reportedly not yet inspected several Superfund sites in the Houston metro area that were flooded in the aftermath of Harvey. The Houston metro area includes more than 12 Superfund sites, the Associated Press reported. According to the AP, these are areas that the EPA has said are some of America's most contaminated places.

### **6 – As waters recede in Houston, concerns shift to chemical facilities**

<http://fox17online.com/2017/09/02/as-waters-recede-in-houston-concerns-shift-to-chemical-facilities/>

What began as a story about flooding, environmentalist groups say, has become about preventable environmental disaster. Coastal Houston is the site of a large concentration of chemical plants, refineries, superfund sites and fossil fuel operations. Some have suffered damage from Hurricane Harvey, releasing toxic compounds into the environment, and environmentalists, in turn, are pointing the finger at politicians and industry leaders who have sought to ax regulations.

### **7 - Waiting for Answers in Corpus Christi**

<http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/politics/news/a57321/corpus-christi-harvey/>

The hotel had closed in anticipation of the storm from out of the sea. The storm had shifted north far enough that the city got brushed, but not hammered, the way Rockport and Port Aransas did. The hotel is still closed. There's a note on the door and the lobby is empty except for some pumps that never were used. People who have reservations pull up to the door. They read the note, and look through the dusty windows at all the strange devices littering the floor, and then they drive down the access road a little further to one of the other hotels that are still open.

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# 2 more chemical containers explode at Crosby chemical plant

By Matt Dempsey, Keri Blakinger, and Lindsay Ellis |

September 1, 2017 | Updated: September 2, 2017 11:49am

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Fire Burns at Crosby, Texas Chemical Plant

Media: Associated Press

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Towering flames and plumes of jet black smoke poured from the flooded Arkema plant in Crosby as volatile chemicals exploded late Friday afternoon.

One container caught fire, and the heat from that fire ignited a second container about 25 feet away, said Arkema executive Richard Rennard. The dramatic display was the latest chapter of a chemical disaster, caused, in part, by floodwaters from Hurricane Harvey.

**HIDDEN DANGER:** Chemical facilities face danger during Harvey shutdowns



Photo: Mark Mulligan, Mark Mulligan / Houston Chronicle

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**IMAGE 1 OF 86**

Smoke lingers over the Arkema plant after another fire at the facility Friday, Sept. 1, 2017.

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Authorities have evacuated residents within a mile and a half of the facility and said the fumes from the fire don't pose an immediate public threat. The Environmental Protection Agency is conducting air and water tests in the area.

Arkema is a maker of organic peroxides commonly used by the plastics and rubber industries. They must be kept in cool temperatures or they can explode. The Arkema plant lost power earlier this week, knocking out the primary supply and backup generators and forcing employees to move the organic peroxides into nine box vans with cooling systems, which soon began to fail.

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**TRANSLATOR**

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The company has abandoned the facility and any hope of preventing the chemicals from catching fire. Rennard said the company believes any fires from the containers won't spread to the plant itself.

Despite the explosions and noxious fumes, Arkema has refused to provide a chemical inventory and facility map to the public. Speaking to reporters Friday morning, Arkema CEO Richard Rowe said the company was balancing "the public's right to know and the public's right to be secure."

That answer wasn't good enough for Luke Metzger, director of Environment Texas.

"There's no good reason they shouldn't be putting this information out," he said. "It makes it look like they're hiding something."



There's little patience or sympathy for Arkema from Crosby residents near the plant.

Philip Mincey had evacuated from his home about a quarter of a mile from Arkema because of floodwaters. He bought the place a year ago. There's enough land that he and his girlfriend can raise four cows, a cat and 30 to 40 chickens. Now, Mincey can't get back to their property. He's worried about their animals, and he's tired of the lack of communication from Arkema about when he will get temporary housing. He doesn't know when he can return home, and he wonders about the dangers of the inevitable explosions from the plant.

"At first, I was understanding; it was an accident," Mincey said. "But now, they're jerking us around."

Late Thursday night, the company provided a list of the chemicals on the site. But the potential hazards they pose remain unclear because the company did not provide the amounts of the chemicals, where those chemicals were located, or in what types of containers the chemicals were stored.

Melissa Wren, a company spokeswoman, said Arkema was advised by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to refer all requests for the detailed chemical inventory, called a Tier Two, to the state agency.

"She's mistaken," said Andrea Morrow, spokeswoman for TCEQ. "(The agency) has told Arkema they are free to release the Tier Two if they so choose."

Morrow said if someone requests the Tier Two from TCEQ, it will have to be through a formal public information request and it would be sent to the Texas Attorney General's Office. That

office, under Greg Abbott and now Ken Paxton, has blocked inventories from the public citing a state law that restricts information that might be useful to terrorists.



The Texas Homeland Security Act, passed in 2003, made government information confidential if it could be used to plot terror attacks. For more than a decade, the law was never invoked to block release of chemical inventories. The state reversed course after widespread media interest in the data following the 2013 explosion at a fertilizer plant in West, Texas.

**PUBLIC ACCESS DENIED:** Arkema backtracks on promise to provide chemical inventory

Arkema has responded to some questions about what led to the emergency. Daryl Roberts, a company safety official, said neutralizing the organic peroxide with another chemical was not practical and that "at no point" did they intend to destroy it.

The company initially considered relocating the chemicals but deemed that process too risky, Roberts said.

"For us to be in a position where we were going to put that material into trailers and try to move it, it runs the risk of not being able to get it out of the area or getting it stuck in traffic, or having a fire or an explosion at a highway or at a public area, versus in the rural area where this site is," he said.

Roberts confirmed two chemicals contained on its government mandated worst-case scenario report -- sulfur dioxide and isobutylene. They were located hundreds of yards from the organic peroxides exploding on the site, he said.

"There's no issues with any of those materials," Roberts said. "No fire or water damage. No degradation in any of the systems that you're asking about."

The company left the material on site with backup generators and a cooling system, but the company didn't say whether the generators were elevated.

"Those were our levels of contingency," Roberts said. "Clearly, that wasn't enough."



Company officials have said they expected the refrigeration to fail in all the trailers and that additional explosions are inevitable for the six remaining containers.

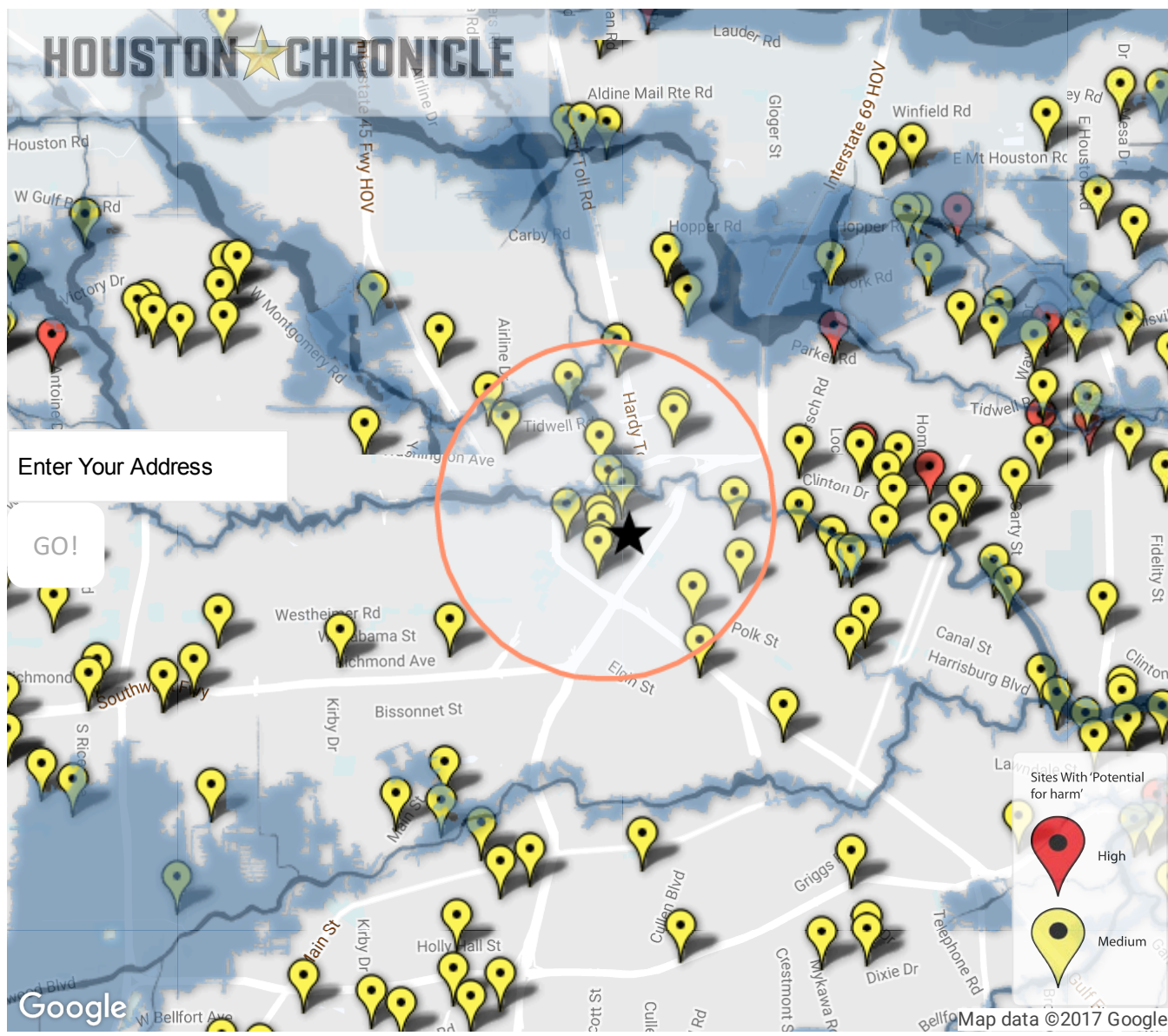
The six containers that remain but located in a more remote location of the plant, said Arkema officials. Bob Royall, assistant chief of the Harris County Fire Marshal's Office, said he believed they could explode in a matter of days as temperatures continue to rise.

"Wish I had a crystal ball," he said.

## Harvey aftermath: Chemical plants imperiled

Hurricane Harvey's winds and floodwaters have created emergencies at chemical facilities across the Houston area, from an Exxon Mobil roof collapse at its massive Baytown complex to the risk of an explosion at a chemical plant northeast of Houston. We combined our [Chemical Breakdown](#) risk map, based on a facility's potential for harm, with the region's 100-year floodplains. Type in a Harris County address in the search bar above to view which sites with "potential for harm" fall within a two-mile radius of that address.





Map written and coded by John D. Harden, with Harvey-related map updates by Rachael Gleason | Source: Mary Kay O'Connor Process Safety Center at Texas A&M and Houston Chronicle

**CHEMICAL BREAKDOWN:** In November 2014, four workers died at a DuPont plant in La Porte after being exposed to a toxic gas. Responding emergency workers weren't sure what was in the air. The surrounding community wasn't, either. A [Houston Chronicle investigation](#) dives deep into Houston's hidden world of explosions and toxic releases and probes the regulatory failures that put us in jeopardy. [Click here to read our series.](#)



**Matt Dempsey**  
Data Reporter



**Keri Blakinger**  
Reporter



**Lindsay Ellis**  
Reporter

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# Phone lines set up for Texans trying to locate Harvey survivors in Louisiana shelters

Advocate staff report SEP 2, 2017 - 10:38 AM



Shannon Bracken looks at her phone while resting on a cot at a shelter at Woodcrest Church after her home was damaged from rising flood waters due to Tropical Storm Harvey on Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2017, in Lumberton, Texas. (Ashley Landis/The Dallas Morning News via AP)

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Ashley Landis

Texas families separated during Hurricane Harvey evacuation will be able to find out whether their relatives are safe in Louisiana shelters through a phone bank, the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services announced Saturday.

Those seeking family members must provide their relative's name, address and date of birth, as well as his or her own name or contact information. The state will determine whether the relatives are in one of Louisiana's two shelters and then pass along the message.

*Story Continued Below*

The DCFS cannot confirm the identities of people in shelters because of privacy and safety concerns.

The phone bank can be accessed by calling (225) 615-0086 and (225) 615-0258

Located in both Alexandria in Shreveport, the shelter has cellphones and charging stations for Harvey survivors to contact friends and family. Survivors can also register at [safeandwell.org](http://safeandwell.org), a site set up by the American Red Cross, that will allow survivors to list themselves as safe.

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# EPA hasn't inspected flooded Houston-area Superfund sites report

BY REBECCA SAVRANSKY - 09/02/17 01:51 PM EDT

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Officials from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have reportedly not yet inspected several Superfund sites in the Houston metro area that were flooded in the aftermath of Harvey.

The Houston metro area includes more than 12 Superfund sites, [the Associated Press reported](#).

According to the AP, these are areas that the EPA has said are some of America's most contaminated places.

A spokeswoman for the EPA said agency experts had previously gone to two such sites in the Corpus Christi area, which is near where Harvey first made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane.

No significant damage was found in those sites, spokeswoman Amy Graham told the AP.

"We will begin to assess other sites after flood waters recede in those areas," Graham said.

Last month, EPA head Scott Pruitt [ordered his staff](#) in a memo to take a handful of actions to streamline cleanups at contaminated Superfund sites.

[VIEW ALL](#)

EPA hasn't inspected flooded Houston-area Superfund sites: report | TheHill

He ordered changes — like taking quick action at sites with high risks of human exposure to human contaminants and focusing resources on sites with the best potential for reuse — based on the recommendations of a task force he convened earlier this year.

The memo sent to high-level staff and regional offices is part of Pruitt's highly-visible effort to make Superfund cleanup a top priority for his time at the EPA.

Harvey, which made landfall last weekend, has devastated Houston and other areas of Texas.

Thousands of people have been displaced and recovery efforts in the region are ongoing.

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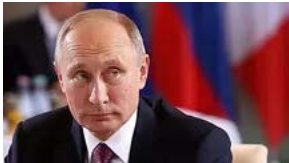
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# Where Harvey's effects were felt the most in Texas

BY RYAN MURPHY

SEPT. 2, 2017



According to a preliminary analysis by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, at least **150,000** properties may have been affected by the floodwaters of Hurricane Harvey. A majority of these properties — at least **96,000** — are located in Harris County.

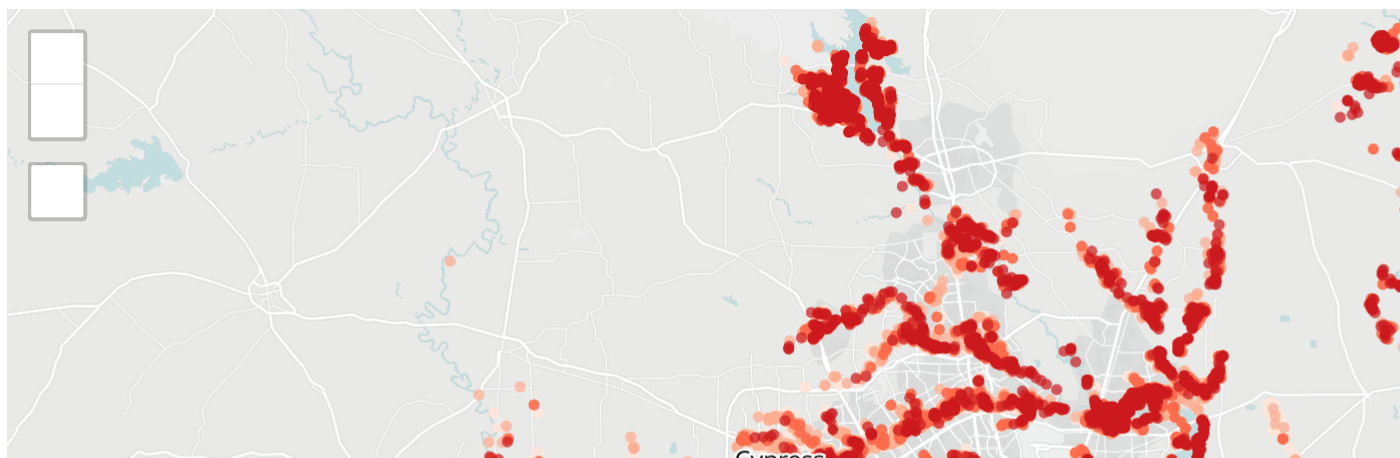
FEMA's damage modeling is based on parcel data and coastal and river flood gauge levels, and does not account for damage that may have been caused by wind or levee breaks, nor does it take into account that structures on a property may be elevated.

[Read more of our Harvey coverage, including how to offer help to those in need.](#)

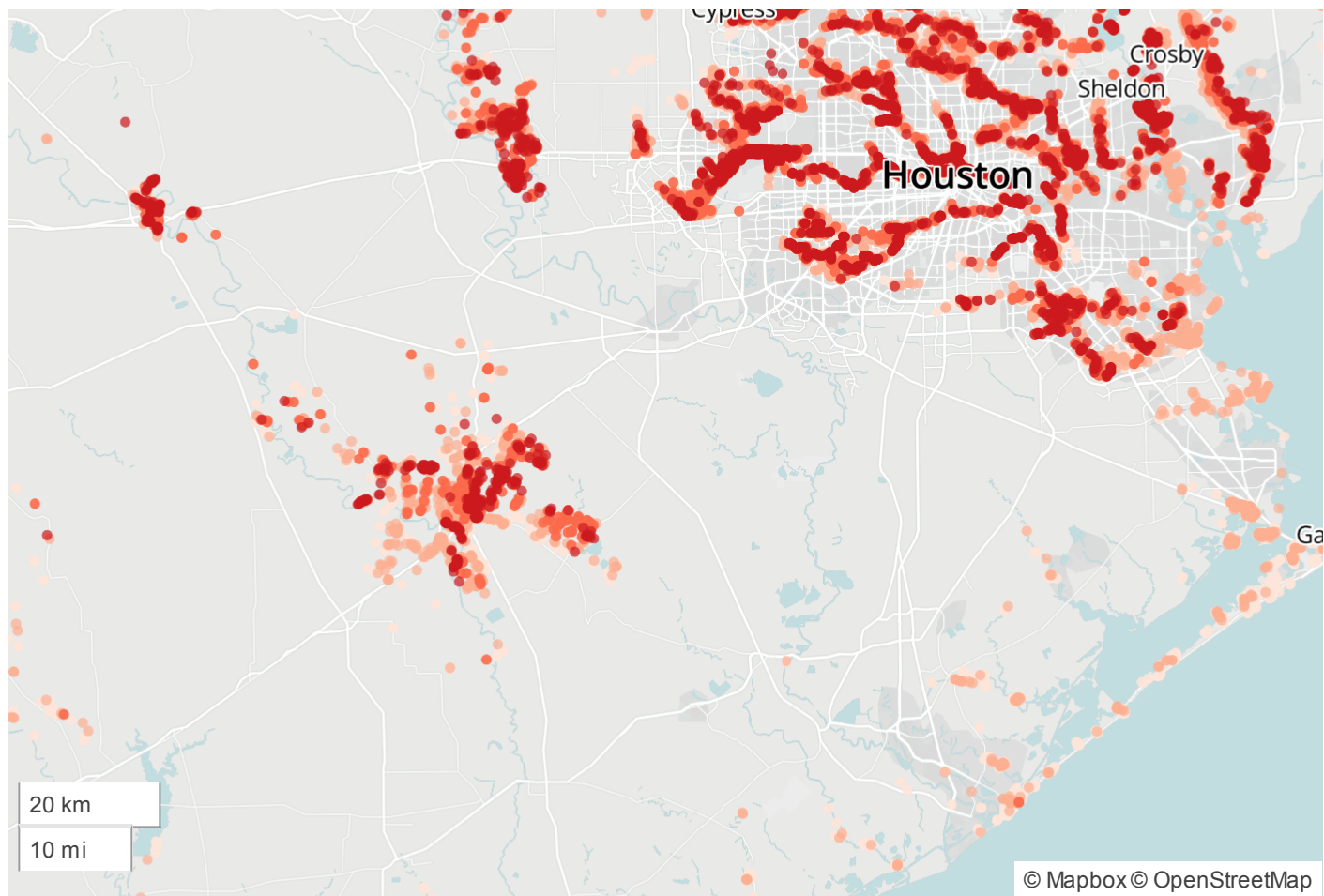
Use the map below to explore the data. FEMA's data collection and analysis is ongoing — we will continue to update the map as more information becomes available.

## Initial FEMA Assessment

Destroyed   Major damage   Minor damage   Affected by floods







Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency analysis as of Aug. 31

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